1

00:00:03,000 --> 00:00:06,000

I walk a different path to a lot of people

2

00:00:06,000 --> 00:00:07,560

without a disability.

3

00:00:07,560 --> 00:00:09,640

But over the last five years,

4

00:00:09,640 --> 00:00:11,880

I've learned to be proud of myself

5

00:00:11,880 --> 00:00:13,680

and what I can do.

6

00:00:13,680 --> 00:00:18,440

I've had some really nice people support me along the way.

7

00:00:18,440 --> 00:00:21,280

I feel special that I am here,

8

00:00:21,280 --> 00:00:24,280

living my life against the odds.

9

00:00:25,320 --> 00:00:29,280

Hello, my name is Rhys Bycroft,

10

00:00:29,280 --> 00:00:33,400

I live in my own flat in Kilbirnie, Wellington.

11

00:00:33,400 --> 00:00:36,400

I am 29 years old.

12

00:00:37,000 --> 00:00:39,800

So when I go back, Rhys was our first child

13

00:00:39,800 --> 00:00:42,000

and we were older parents.

14

00:00:44,520 --> 00:00:48,240

I had a good pregnancy and Rhys was a really good weight.

15

00:00:48,240 --> 00:00:52,160

And so there's absolutely no reason to suspect that there was

16

00:00:52,160 --> 00:00:53,480

going to ever be a problem.

17

00:00:53,480 --> 00:00:54,640

But there was.

18

00:00:57,200 --> 00:01:04,000

I was born at 9:18a.m. on January 17th, 1993,

19

00:01:04,000 --> 00:01:06,600

at Palmerston North Hospital.

20

00:01:06,600 --> 00:01:10,840

Mum had to be transferred from Levin to Palmerston North

21

00:01:10,840 --> 00:01:15,200

Hospital by ambulance, but once we arrived I had

22

00:01:15,200 --> 00:01:17,080

stopped breathing.

23

00:01:17,080 --> 00:01:20,080

This caused damage to my brain.

24

00:01:20,080 --> 00:01:24,080

I had seizures and couldn't breathe on my own.

25

00:01:24,080 --> 00:01:26,760

I wasn't expected to live.

26

00:01:27,240 --> 00:01:31,400

But just as they were about to put the ventilator back on, I took

27

00:01:31,400 --> 00:01:33,360

my first breath.

28

00:01:33,360 --> 00:01:36,360

At 11 days old, I decided to live.

29

00:01:37,720 --> 00:01:41,160

For the first six months we would be visiting a paediatrician

30

00:01:41,160 --> 00:01:44,840

regularly and then it unfolded that actually, yeah, it wasn't

31

00:01:44,840 --> 00:01:46,760

particularly good.

32

00:01:46,760 --> 00:01:52,200

I remember being told things like, just take him home

33

00:01:52,200 --> 00:01:52,880

and love him.

34

00:01:52,880 --> 00:01:54,680

Don't expect much.

35

00:01:54,680 --> 00:01:58,800

But at six weeks, Rhys smiled.

36

00:01:58,800 --> 00:02:01,800

So we knew there was a personality in there.

37

00:02:01,800 --> 00:02:04,120

And a gorgeous, gorgeous smile.

38

00:02:04,120 --> 00:02:06,720

And we thought, right, this kid's got personality.

39

00:02:08,440 --> 00:02:12,960

Right from when I was born, we always went traveling as a family.

40

00:02:12,960 --> 00:02:15,920

Often with friends and their kids.

41

00:02:15,920 --> 00:02:21,120

We did road trips and camping, lots of different places

42

00:02:21,120 --> 00:02:22,640

in New Zealand.

43

00:02:23,600 --> 00:02:28,040

ACC has been a huge provider and we've worked with them,

44

00:02:28,040 --> 00:02:33,040

collaborated and always been appreciative because we have to

45

00:02:33,040 --> 00:02:34,120

always problem solve.

46

00:02:34,120 --> 00:02:37,120

We’d come to the party and also say, we want this,

47

00:02:37,120 --> 00:02:40,720

can we put in X amount of money and come up with

48

00:02:40,720 --> 00:02:41,840

this sort of package.

49

00:02:42,720 --> 00:02:45,720

We read this article and it was about a communication tool,

50

00:02:45,720 --> 00:02:48,880

like how you could use your eyes to communicate.

51

00:02:48,880 --> 00:02:51,880

The only effective movement he has is with his head.

52

00:02:51,880 --> 00:02:52,840

That's it.

53

00:02:52,840 --> 00:02:55,680

And so we thought, wow, this sounds amazing.

54

00:02:55,680 --> 00:03:01,560

So at the age of six, Rhys flies to Washington DC,

55

00:03:01,560 --> 00:03:04,840

to trial the Eyegaze computer.

56

00:03:04,840 --> 00:03:07,840

Cerebral palsy means I have a body that

57

00:03:07,840 --> 00:03:09,880

doesn't work well.

58

00:03:09,880 --> 00:03:12,880

I can do some things like using my eyes

59

00:03:12,880 --> 00:03:14,480

to communicate.

60

00:03:14,480 --> 00:03:17,080

I can turn my head using the

61

00:03:17,080 --> 00:03:19,040

chin or cheek switch.

62

00:03:19,040 --> 00:03:22,560

I do this with my Dynavox and to operate

63

00:03:22,560 --> 00:03:24,320

my power chair.

64

00:03:25,160 --> 00:03:30,240

Just as Rhys got bigger and older, the gap between what his peers

65

00:03:30,240 --> 00:03:32,760

are doing and him became greater.

66

00:03:32,760 --> 00:03:36,440

His vision was, we had a meeting, it was a path about Rhys

67

00:03:36,440 --> 00:03:37,480

in the future.

68

00:03:37,480 --> 00:03:38,720

He said, I want to live in Wellington.

69

00:03:38,720 --> 00:03:42,080

And I had always said about Rhys, you’re not going to live with

70

00:03:42,080 --> 00:03:43,800

me until the day I die.

71

00:03:43,800 --> 00:03:45,680

This is not our future.

72

00:03:45,680 --> 00:03:48,480

So then Rhys moved to Wellington.

73

00:03:50,680 --> 00:03:52,200

I'm the team leader.

74

00:03:52,200 --> 00:03:54,400

So we have a team of six here and we all just

75

00:03:54,400 --> 00:03:55,320

do different shifts.

76

00:03:55,320 --> 00:03:57,240

Rhys has 24 hour care.

77

00:03:57,680 --> 00:03:59,760

Alright, going up.

78

00:04:01,160 --> 00:04:05,480

Rhys has got an incredible sense of humour.

79

00:04:05,480 --> 00:04:11,000

He's so funny, and I've gone to places and he just lights

80

00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:12,520

up a room.

81

00:04:12,520 --> 00:04:14,360

He makes people smile.

82

00:04:17,640 --> 00:04:20,360

Five years on, It's like he reads my mind.

83

00:04:20,360 --> 00:04:22,600

We're so in sync now.

84

00:04:22,600 --> 00:04:24,960

And I never ever would have thought that could happen.

85

00:04:24,960 --> 00:04:25,920

It's amazing.

86

00:04:25,920 --> 00:04:27,400

He's an amazing person.

87

00:04:33,000 --> 00:04:34,640

I love rugby.

88

00:04:34,640 --> 00:04:38,680

All blacks, Hurricanes and Lions.

89

00:04:38,680 --> 00:04:44,520

I like airplanes, quiz nights, walks, cafes,

90

00:04:44,520 --> 00:04:47,000

exploring, visiting friends

91

00:04:47,000 --> 00:04:48,880

and meeting new people.

92

00:04:49,560 --> 00:04:50,520

This is Rhys.

93

00:04:50,520 --> 00:04:51,320

Hello.

94

00:04:51,320 --> 00:04:54,320

He’s a big, big fan, as you can tell.

95

00:04:55,240 --> 00:04:56,840

The Hurricanes are one of the reasons Rhys

96

00:04:56,840 --> 00:04:57,800

moved to Wellington.

97

00:04:57,800 --> 00:04:59,200

Oh true, that’s cool.

98

00:04:59,200 --> 00:05:00,520

Always nice to see your face at

99

00:05:00,520 --> 00:05:01,480

training bro.

100

00:05:01,480 --> 00:05:02,440

There you go.

101

00:05:02,440 --> 00:05:03,120

Yeah, awesome.

102

00:05:04,640 --> 00:05:07,480

I have two daughters, and after a while of getting

103

00:05:07,480 --> 00:05:10,080

to know Rhys and going out and doing activities,

104

00:05:10,080 --> 00:05:11,960

I was like to my kids, do you want to come and

105

00:05:11,960 --> 00:05:14,000

meet this guy that I’m now working with?

106

00:05:14,000 --> 00:05:18,000

Three years in, Rhys and Ashley are very close.

107

00:05:18,000 --> 00:05:22,080

She now works as a support worker and, Rhys and one

108

00:05:22,080 --> 00:05:24,640

of the guys she supports, Phoenix,

109

00:05:24,640 --> 00:05:25,880

they’re best buddies now.

110

00:05:26,840 --> 00:05:31,040

Ashley is very special to me and Phoenix is too.

111

00:05:31,040 --> 00:05:34,040

I'm not scared to share my emotions

112

00:05:34,040 --> 00:05:36,280

and I'm supported by them.

113

00:05:37,400 --> 00:05:41,440

Rhys turns 30 in January and this is actually really timely

114

00:05:41,440 --> 00:05:44,800

because it's made me go back through all the

115

00:05:44,800 --> 00:05:47,800

photos and the journey.

116

00:05:47,800 --> 00:05:51,800

Some of it, of course, has been really painful and it doesn't

117

00:05:51,800 --> 00:05:55,640

matter 30 years on, the feeling and the intensity just

118

00:05:55,640 --> 00:05:58,320

never goes away.

119

00:05:58,320 --> 00:06:03,240

And yet, by doing this process I’ve realised that we’ve actually

120

00:06:03,240 --> 00:06:05,800

really come out the other end and it’s time for a

121

00:06:05,800 --> 00:06:07,080

huge celebration.

122

00:06:08,800 --> 00:06:11,440

So I’m really proud of you for working through

123

00:06:11,440 --> 00:06:16,720

and thinking about things and coming to terms with

124

00:06:16,720 --> 00:06:18,680

where you’re at really.

125

00:06:18,680 --> 00:06:22,560

And you’ve also been really supportive of me, protecting me in

126

00:06:22,560 --> 00:06:25,560

the last 4 years while I’ve sort of gained my strength and got back

127

00:06:25,560 --> 00:06:29,000

on an even keel.

128

00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:33,720

So I really appreciate that too, and your maturity around thinking

129

00:06:33,720 --> 00:06:37,240

about me and putting yourself aside.

130

00:06:38,600 --> 00:06:40,680

Yeah, I’m really proud of you.

131

00:06:40,680 --> 00:06:42,960

I’m really proud of your journey.